

# **Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Administration Committee**

Final Approved Meeting Summary  
October 14, 1998

**Committee members present:** Doug Hurley, Chair, Peter Bennett, Vice Chair, Greg Devereux, Bob Dilger, Representative Ruth Fisher, Tomio Moriguchi, Connie Niva, Patricia Notter, Senator Dino Rossi, Ken Smith, Judie Stanton

**Committee members absent:** Peter Hurley (attended Investment Committee)

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## **Committee Charter**

**Action Item.** Chairman Doug Hurley introduced the revised charter. Here is the original text with the Committee's changes indicated by (deletions) and underlines (additions).

**The Administration Committee will recommend improvements to change key structures, policies, and practices of governments, businesses, and labor that contribute to cost-efficient and effective transportation solutions to citizens. To accomplish this charter the committee intends to inventory, analyze and evaluate a broad array of topics including:**

- **the structures, policies and practices of government entities, private business, and labor that affect the delivery of transportation programs and projects.**
- **the relationship between federal, state and local government agencies in delivering transportation programs, projects and services.**
- **the effectiveness of governance and planning organizations at all levels in determining transportation needs and priorities.**
- **the effectiveness of the 1977 consolidation of all transportation functions in the WSDOT.**

It was pointed out that there was a grammatical problem in the first sentence. This was corrected by replacing "actions to change..." with the words "improvements to..." It was also suggested that "federal" be added to the relationships that are to be examined in the second bullet point. The Committee discussed whether the charter as drafted might constrain the Committee's discussions. It was agreed that it would not and was unanimously approved.

## **Committee Work Plan**

Project Manager Kjris Lund recapped the work of the three Committees in their initial meetings and said a significant amount of overlap was identified in the topics the Committees wished to work on and in the informational needs they identified. Staff are proposing a series of joint informational briefings for all three Committees. Broadly, the briefings will cover the topics of planning and prioritization processes, funding sources and constraints, regulatory processes, public works processes and public opinion research. It was suggested that structural issues like the organization of WSDOT's six districts and the governance by the Transportation Commission be added. Chairman Hurley said the three Committee chairs would be working together to review areas of overlap and to bring recommendations when appropriate.

Project Manager Lund went on to suggest that as part of the joint informational briefings there would be individual work sessions in November and December for the three Committees to work on topic selection. The current timeline envisioned adoption of selected topics at the full Commission meeting on January 14, 1999.

## **Information Gathering**

Members recapped the items previously identified as informational needs. It was agreed that a glossary of terms, flowcharts and case studies would be provided as part of the briefing materials. Members discussed how best to reach out to stakeholder groups to solicit topics and information for all three committees. A letter is to be mailed to transportation groups asking for input on topics. It was noted that many of the key groups were already represented on the Blue Ribbon Commission. In general, though, it was agreed the outreach needs to be broader than the "inner ring" of most knowledgeable people.

Communications consultant Laird Harris commented that most of the public will not want to get involved until the stage when there is something to react to. At that point, broad outreach to business groups like the NFIB and others will be appropriate. It was agreed to ask the Transportation Commission, cities, counties, labor and business for their suggestions.

Polling data show that there is a lack of connection in the public's mind between the transportation system and the structure of funding. The connections will have to be built between funding and solutions to problems. Problems and solutions need to be linked back to individuals' lives. One important constituency was identified as the emergency response community, including police, fire and 911 dispatcher associations, all of which have a keen interest in being able to respond quickly. Another connection to be stressed is the cost of transporting goods to the price consumers pay for those goods.

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It was remarked that transportation advocates also need to overcome the fear in some people's minds that improving transportation will only stimulate more growth and in-migration. Environmental issues are not going away and the trade-offs between environmental quality, endless processes and transportation capacity need to be addressed.

### **Criteria for Topic Selection**

Facilitator Lynn Guttman handed out a draft list of criteria and suggested that they would be useful as screens in narrowing down what will be a very long list of topics. Here is the original text with the Committee's changes indicated by (deletions) and underlines (additions).

#### **Action Item: Criteria for selecting topics for further discussion:**

- **Is the topic within the scope of our Committee's charter?**
- **Does the topic have the potential to result in significant short-term improvements (in mobility of people and goods)?**
- **Does the topic have the potential to result in significant cumulative long-term improvements (in mobility of people and goods)**
- **Does the topic have the potential for increasing cost effectiveness of current practices, structures, or services?**
- **Does the topic have the potential for increasing service effectiveness?**
- **Does the topic have the potential to reduce the time of the numerous process requirements needed to move a transportation idea to a decision?**
- **Does the topic have the potential to improve the transportation decision-making processes?**
- **Does the topic have the potential to be implemented**

Additional criterion was suggested: Does the topic have the potential to be implemented? Discussion ensued about whether such a feasibility criterion would screen out topics too quickly. Members said that the dialogue is important and needs to take place before anything is decided, yet a reality check needs to be there too.

It was asked whether information is available on what assumptions are used about the price of gas and other economic factors when forecasts are made about future needs. Staff agreed to ensure it was included in the briefings.

Other potential criteria were discussed: agreement by a minimum number of Committee members to a topic to avoid an "oddball" topic only one person is interested in; an

accountability criterion; criteria related to clarity, transparency and streamlining of the system. Members agreed at this stage to tilt toward being inclusive. Members discussed whether “improvements in mobility” included “increased transportation choices” which was therefore redundant and agreed to strike the reference to increased choices in the second and third criteria. The fourth criterion “Does the topic have the potential to build upon promising, existing ideas and proposals?” was stricken as redundant.

Three criteria were added: Does the topic have the potential for increasing service effectiveness? Does the topic have the potential to improve the transportation decision-making processes? Does the topic have the potential to be implemented?

### **Topic List**

The draft topic list was discussed. It was noted that “reliability” and “predictability” in use of the transportation system are as important or more so than absolute reduction in congestion or travel time. User fees and tolls were mentioned again and the distinction was made between tolling by a public authority vs. tolling by a private sector entity with a profit element included. The distinction was also raised between paying for transportation out of a dedicated source like the gas tax or out of the general fund. It was asked, How much is the public already paying for? A revised topic list including additions is Attachment 1.

### **Conclusion**

Chairman Hurley recapped the items for the afternoon presentation to the full Commission: the amended charter, the criteria, and selected items from the draft topic list. Committee members were asked if they had come up with a new name for the Committee and it was agreed that staff members would return to the suggestions at the next meeting.

### **Public Comment**

No members of the public wished to speak.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 am.

**Attachment 1:**  
**Administration Committee**  
**Omnibus List of Topics of Interest**

(From 10/14/98 meeting and brainstorming session of 10/5/98. No order or priority implied; duplications have not been omitted.)

- Increase the predictability of travel time
- Relate emergency incident response times to needed transportation system improvements
- Introduce market forces in system use and delivery
- Public wants relief from traffic congestion, but many are unsure that current taxes are being used effectively
- What level of service is the public willing to pay for?
- Connect public's concerns about traffic congestion to the proposed transportation service solutions
- Should tolls be used to finance improvements?
- Confront the (public's) fear that better roads, improved transportation will cause population and traffic growth
- Who decides what gets built and when?
- Something feels wrong with the transportation system. The transportation arena feels like a closed shop. Should the system be radically changed?
- The numerous steps needed to move a transportation idea to a decision
- The numerous regulatory "hoops" that must be satisfied while planning, funding, designing, permitting and constructing a capital improvement project (e.g., review and/or permits from Corps of Engineers, Department of Fisheries, Department of Ecology, municipal storm water utilities, National Marine and Fisheries, municipal land use departments, etc.)
- Requirements that have been adopted as law by the state and local jurisdictions to address specific needs but cumulatively can result in lengthy and contradictory decision making, such as:
  - Environmental issues
  - Cost of environmental protection requirements, especially related to protection and restoration of fisheries
  - Overlapping, "helpful," legal oversight by multiple agencies and jurisdictions who do not act in synch
  - Lack of concurrent review and permitting
- Understand the society's level of frustration with a lack of action

- Grid lock, both in terms of legislation and traffic
- Should society provide transportation?
- Transportation Modes and Facilities:
  - Ferries
  - Bridges
  - High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes
  - Bicycles
  - Pedestrians
  - Transit
  - Park and Ride Lots (security issues)
- Corridor planning versus planning for smaller segments of the transportation network
- Performance bench marking
- Changing expectations about the use of cars; considering rewards and incentives to change behavior
- The recent failure of congestion pricing program
- Public/private partnerships
- Legislative appropriation processes, including the biennial appropriation schedule which forces projects to be planned, designed and constructed in stages so as to not bind future legislatures with funding commitments
- Changes to the 18th Amendment of the State's Constitution
- The process local jurisdictions must use to aggregate funding from different sources
- New initiatives from the State Department of Transportation such as the Wetlands Strategic Plans
- Build upon 80% complete or successful previous plans/ideas, focusing on those developed after 1990.
- Privatization and/or managed competition should be topics initially considered although some Committee members questioned their viability
- Anticipated explosion of high tech industry, especially in the Vancouver, WA area. "We need to stay ahead of the curve."
- Community sentiment against congestion translates into community sentiment against (commercial and industrial) growth.
- Enlarge the number of transportation (modal) choices which trade off price / time / privacy (example: the Hong Kong airport bus, taxi, train options)
- Sense of personal safety on buses and trains

What mix of expenditures leads us to the products we desire?